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ABSTRACT

Observing that speech communication, by whatever term it is called, is now a popular major among the traditional liberal arts, this paper proposes an essential speech communication curriculum for the small, comprehensive college. The first part of the paper presents a rationale for the curriculum by exploring how the curriculum reflects (1) its identity as a component of a comprehensive college, (2) a viable concept of liberal education, and (3) the postulates that identify the unique character of the speech discipline. The second part of the paper presents the hypothetical curriculum, which would require students to complete 12 hours in inquiry, including argumentation, logic, and rhetorical theory; 12 hours in literacy, including public speaking, linguistics, and composition; 3 hours in numerical data, including behavioral science methodology; 3 hours in historical awareness, including history and criticism of American public address; and 6 hours in values, including ethics and persuasion. The curriculum also includes course listings for recommended 18 hours in a minor track, with courses in organizational communication and mass communication. (HTH)

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AN ESSENTIAL CURRICULUM FOR THE SMALL, COMPREHENSIVE COLLEGE SPEECH COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

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In their Report of the Project on Redefining the Meaning and Purpose of Baccalaureate Degrees, a committee of the Association of American Colleges criticized typical humanities and social science majors for embracing a "marketplace philosophy" of curriculum development resulting in "little more than a gathering of courses taken in one department, lacking structure and depth . . ."[1] The Report went on to urge curriculum committees to act in ways both "responsive and resistant" in building a coherent liberal arts undergraduate program rather than to react to fads, fashions, and the pressure for academic popularity. The challenge is pertinent to our discipline. Whether labeled Speech, Speech Communication, Communication, Communication Studies, or Communication Arts, ours is now an "in" major among the traditional liberal arts. Is this because students realize communication theories and skills are crucial to their personal and professional success as well as to the future of their society, that a Speech Communication degree provides them a more sophisticated alternative to the Columbia School of Broadcasting, or the degree program offers a less rigorous path to commencement?

As one concerned with emphasizing the integrity of the Speech discipline and with providing students with the best of a department's available knowledge, skills, equipment, and facilities, I would like to share my perception of an essential Speech Communication curriculum for the small, comprehensive

college. This curriculum reflects: (1) its identity as a component of a comprehensive college, (2) a viable concept of liberal education, and (3) the postulates which identify the unique character of the Speech discipline.

The Comprehensive College

Those who trace their intellectual lineage to Aristotle find the grandiloquent language of the ivy-covered tower appealing. However, few of us teach at truly liberal arts institutions today. This statement may appear to smack of heresy and threaten the scholar-teacher's personal and professional identity. Yet along side the a&m university now stands the small, comprehensive college with its Departments and Schools of Education, Business, Allied Health, and Computer Science. How then does the speech teacher cope in this environment?

Speech teachers must recognize and rejoice in our role as members of a comprehensive college faculty. To do so may well require our reassessing the relationship between liberal education and career training. Bert Bradley, Head of the Speech Communication Department at Auburn University notes a liberal education is "one that transcends occupational concerns, that enables an individual to cope with shifts in values, vocations, careers, and the environment."[2] I suggest the examination proceed by dividing the concept of "career" into two parts, professions and jobs. Professions such as medicine, law, and electrical contracting require the direct application of school-learned knowledge to the work task, while jobs like college president, sales manager, and bank executive require

individuals to apply their talents to tasks not studied in a specific course or program. The present shrinking pool of high school seniors regard a baccaluraeate degree as a ticket to high-paying and self-actualizing employment (professions and jobs). Working with their faculty colleagues throughout the campus, Speech Communication curriculum committees at small, comprehensive colleges must respond to "the demands of the local community, the state, regional business and industrial interests, and other representatives of the external community," yet resist surrendering an emphasis upon a meaningful curricular structure reflecting a viable liberal arts perspective.[3]

Liberal Education

While little agreement exists in defining either the concept of liberal education or the subsequent attitudinal and behavioral goals of such an education, the Speech Communication faculty must reach consensus upon a viable concept of liberal education prior to any attempt at curriclulum review and development. I prefer Henry Copeland's, president of The College of Wooster, insight that "The inherent goal of liberal learning is to enlarge our capacity for mindfulness--the acts and activities of creating with our minds and of exercising our analytical and speculative faculties."[4] I choose to amplify "mindfulness" as manifested in the individual's ability to analyze complex problems and concepts, arrive at rational, ethical answers and perspectives, and communicate subsequent responses clearly and effectively to others.

The Association of American College's committee has proposed a "minimum required program of study for all students, consisting of the intellectual, aesthetic, and philosophic experiences that should enter the lives of men and women engaged in baccalaureate education." They identify the following experiences as essential "methods and processes, modes of access to understanding and judgement: Inquiry, Literacy, Understanding Numerical Data, Historical Consciousness, Science, Values, Art, International and Multicultural Experiences, and Study-in-Depth." No surprisingly, the committee stresses the need for each academic program to reflect a relationship with the institution's curriculum as a whole.[5]

Speech Communication and Liberal Education

In the post-baby boom era speech educators cannot assume administrators, colleagues from other fields, students, and the general public will automatically acknowledge, if they ever did, our discipline as inherent to liberal learning. Hence, efforts in curriculum development must demonstrate our singular contribution. I feel the unique character of the speech discipline, a discipline wholly engaged in the systematic analysis of the human communication process, rests upon at least four interrelated postulates.

1. Speech Communication explores the co-creation of meaning, the result of the transaction which occurs in a meeting between people. Hence, the communication process is meaning-centered rather than message-centered.

2. Speech Communication is situation-bound, ie., rhetorical. As Friedrich Solmsen indicated in his introduction to Rhetoric, "Aristotle certainly visualizes a speech not as composed for the admiration of literary connoisseurs through all time but as designed for a specific, practical end, as delivered before an audience, as calculated to prove and to convince."[6]

3. Speech Communication deals with the facilitation of choice-making among alternatives. The late Karl Wallace noted that "the arts of dialectic and rhetoric took their being from situations that admitted of alternative possibilities, and suggested the rhetorical relationship between message sender and message receiver be viewed as one of advisor and advisee, with each accepting their obligations of choice-making in a free society."[7]

4. Thus, Speech Communication involves an inherent moral dimension. Whenever through primarily informative or persuasive discourse one attempts to influence an individual's ability to make choices among alternatives, the transaction automatically assumes an ethical responsibility. As Henry Copeland wrote, "It is this capacity for mindfulness, the choices it makes possible and the moral boundaries we use to justify these choices, which sets us apart from the rest of creation . . ."[8]

I contend these four postulates, in addition to forming the basis for a center which holds our complex and burgeoning discipline, make significant contributions to "an education that will enable the American people to live responsibly

and joyfully, fulfilling their promise as individual humans and their obligations as American citizens."[9]

Hypothetical Curriculum

I now offer my perception of an essential curriculum for the Speech Communication Department of a small comprehensive, college. I do so fully acknowledging that this proposal, like any other, must be considered in light of the institution's statement of purpose and the invaluable analysis and discussion of colleagues within the discipline and across the curriculum.

Inquiry (12 Hrs)

Speech 3--: Argumentation. Research, analysis, case construction, and refutation with application to formal debate and speaking.

Speech 3--: Group Process. Problem solving, group communication, and leadership process.

Philosophy 3--: Basic Logic. Informal logic in ordinary language, Aristotelian logic, and contemporary symbolic logic.

Speech 3--: Rhetorical Theory. Western rhetorical theories from Plato to the present.

(See also Speech 4--: Persuasion)

Literacy (12 Hrs)

Speech 1--: Public Speaking. Principles and techniques essential to effective public speaking.

Speech 2--: Interpersonal Communication. Principles and techniques of effective interpersonal communication.

Speech 2--: Voice and Diction. Phonetics and vocal skill development.

English 3--: Linguistics. English phonology, morphology, and syntax.

English 4--: Advanced Composition. Instruction in various types of composition.

Understanding Numerical Data (3 Hrs)

Sociology/Psychology 3--: Behavioral Science Methodology. Research, design, basic statistical concepts, nature of measurement, test development, meaning of test scores, uses and abuses of testing.

Historical Awareness (3 Hrs)

Speech 4--: History and Criticism of American Public Address. Rhetorical analysis of selected speakers, speeches, and movements.

Values (6 Hrs)

Philosophy 3--: Ethics. Major ethical and metaethical theories of western philosophy. Critical comparison of systems that make value judgements about well being, right conduct, moral character, and justice.

Speech 4--: Persuasion. Critical judgement and choice-making through analysis of theories and techniques of persuasive communication in contemporary society.

(See also Speech 3--: History and Criticism of American Public Address)

Study-in-Depth. Students would be encouraged to complete 18 hours in a minor course of study tailored to meet their personal and career interests. For example, consider the following options.

Organizational Communication

Business 3--:	Principles of Managment
Business 3--:	Personnel Management
Business 3--:	Principles of Marketing
Business 3--:	Advertising
Spch/Bus 3--:	Production and Operations Managment
Spch/Bus 4--:	Organization Theory and Behavior
Spch/Bus 4--:	Public Relations
Speech 4--:	Internship
Speech 4--:	Independent Study

Mass Communication

Journalism 2--:	Mass Communication
Art 2--:	Introduction to Photography
Art/Jrnl. 3--:	Graphics
Speech 2--:	Film Making
Jrnl. 3--:	News Writing and Editing
Speech 3--:	Film Production, Design and Management
Jrnl. 4--:	Mass Media Law and Ethics
Speech 4--:	Public Relations
Spch/Jrnl. 4--:	Internship
Spch/Jrnl 4--:	Independent Study

Closing Remarks

Many Speech Communication majors continue with their education in hopes of gaining admission to a particular profession, but most will enter the job market. As we engage in curriculum review and design, we have the same responsibility to all of our students. John Stuart Mill alluded to this noting, "Men are men before they are lawyers or physicians or manufacturers; and if you make them capable and sensible men, they will make themselves capable and sensible lawyers and manufacturers."[10] I believe the essential curriculum for the small college Speech Communication department can be designed as realistic component of a comprehensive college reflecting a liberal arts tradition with distinctive qualities as a discipline and enabling students to become sensible and capable practitioners regardless of choice of job or profession.

END NOTES

[1] "The Report Of The Project On Redefining The Meaning and Purpose of Baccalaureate Degrees" in The Chronicle of Higher Education, 29, February 13, 1985, p. 12.

[2] Bert E. Bradley, "Speech Communication and Liberal Education," Southern Speech Communication Journal, 45(Fall, 1979), 4.

[3] "The Report," 15.

[4] Henry Copeland, "The Ant and the Twig," in Wooster Alumni Magazine, 99(Fall, 1984), 5.

[5] "The Report," 12.

[6] Friedrich Solmsen, "Introduction," in Rhetoric translated by W. Rhys Roberts, (New York: Random House, 1954), xii.

[7] Karl Wallace, "Rhetoric as Advising," Southern Speech Communication Journal, 29(Summer, 1964), 279-287.

[8] Copeland, 5.

[9] "The Report," 18.

[10] John L. Munschauer, "Are Liberal-Arts Graduates Good for Anything?", The Chronicle of Higher Education, 23, September 10, 1979, p. 48.